

I. INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton was initially prepared by the Town Council, Town Planning Commission and the Town's consulting planning team. The Plan was adopted by the Mayor and Town Council on September 13, 1993. In May 1995, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors initiated a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM) for the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA) surrounding Hamilton as defined in the Choices and Changes: Loudoun County General Plan. The Loudoun County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors reviewed the initial Hamilton Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the UGA (now called the Joint Land Management Area [JLMA]) and made revisions as agreed to by the Town of Hamilton. The Board of Supervisors and Town of Hamilton adopted this revised comprehensive plan on February 12, 1996 and December 20, 1995 respectively which superseded the General Plan guidelines for land use in the Hamilton UGA, and supersedes the original September 13, 1993 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Town. In October of 1999 the Town of Hamilton initiated the five-year review of the Comprehensive Plan. During this review the Hamilton Planning Commission recommended a revision to the UGA. The Board of Supervisors and Town of Hamilton adopted this revised Urban Growth Area on September 5, 2000 and August 1, 2000 respectively. The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and the Town of Hamilton adopted this latest version of the Comprehensive Plan (which supersedes all previous Comprehensive Plans) on April 21, 2003 and March 10, 2003 respectively.

Purpose and Legal Basis of the Comprehensive Plan

There are several fundamental reasons for any local jurisdiction to prepare and implement a comprehensive plan, including the following items:

1. Forecast and prepare for future changes in the community such as population size, employment base, environmental quality, and the demand for public services and facilities.
2. Set goals for the future based upon the concerns, needs and aspirations of local citizens.
3. Establish policies, or courses of action, needed to achieve those goals and to protect the public health, safety and welfare.
4. In Virginia and many other states, to conform with state requirements that every local government adopt and maintain a comprehensive plan.

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that every governing body in the Commonwealth adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction by July 1, 1980. Section 15.2-2230 requires the local planning commission to review that plan at least once every five years.

Section 15.2-2200 of the Code of Virginia establishes the legislative intent of planning and zoning enabling authority. In summary, the Commonwealth's intent is to encourage local governments to:

- a. Improve the public health, safety, convenience and welfare of the citizens;
- b. Plan for future development with adequate highway, transit, pedestrian, bicycle, health, recreational, and other facilities;
- c. Recognize the needs of agriculture, industry and business in future growth;
- d. Preserve agricultural and forestal land;
- e. Provide a healthy surrounding for family life in residential areas; and
- f. Provide that community growth be consonant with the efficient use of public funds.



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Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia specifically states that the comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.

It further states that the comprehensive plan shall be general in nature in that it shall accomplish the following:

1. Designate the general or approximate location and character of features shown on the plan, including where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, removed or changed.
2. Show the long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory and may include such items as the designation of areas for different kinds of public and private land use, a system of transportation facilities, a system of community service facilities, historical areas, and areas for the implementation of groundwater protection measures.

In Virginia, the local Comprehensive Plan is a guide for making community development decisions and thus the governing body can exercise some discretion in how strictly it interprets and adheres to the plan. However, the Code provides that the construction of streets or other public facilities be subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission as to whether the general location and extent of the proposed facility is in substantial accord with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Relationship of the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton and the JLMA and the Revised General Plan for Loudoun County

In July 2001, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors adopted the Revised General Plan, which is the central element of its Comprehensive Plan. This document replaced the previous comprehensive plan called the Choices and Changes: General Plan, which had been adopted in 1991.

During the course of preparing Revised General Plan, the County sought input from the incorporated Towns as to their preferences for planning policy for the County land adjacent to their corporate limits. The Town of Hamilton contributed its views on these matters, and the Town's recommendations were fully considered by the County during the process. However, the policies of the Revised General Plan for the Hamilton area are general in nature and thus set the stage for more detailed plans for the territory around the Town.

Because the further development of land around the Town will have a direct relationship on the fabric of the Town, it is appropriate for the Town to develop detailed planning policy recommendations for that area. Any such policy recommendations from the Town for the County land surrounding it will not become formal government policy unless and until the County Board of Supervisors adopts those policies as part of the County's own Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton and the JLMA consists of two distinct territories for planning policy:

1. The incorporated Town which is governed by the Hamilton Town Council, and;
2. The JLMA which surrounds the Town and is governed by the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors.

The Revised General Plan designates an area surrounding the Town as “Joint Land Management Area” (JLMA). The Town may extend Town water and sewer facilities to areas within the JLMA and this area typically will provide for development at higher densities than in the rural area. Note that the term “Joint Land Management Area” (JLMA) replaces the term “Urban Growth Area” (UGA) which was used in the previous Hamilton Comprehensive Plan.

Together these areas make up the total planning area, which this Plan addresses. References in the Plan to the “Town” will refer to the incorporated limits and references to the JLMA will apply to that area outside of the incorporated limits that is within County jurisdiction and so designated in the Revised General Plan.

Summary of County Plan Policy for the Hamilton Area

Loudoun County’s Revised General Plan establishes countywide goals and planning policies, including broad policies for guiding future development. For areas around the Towns, the County policy advocates the preservation of the rural heritage of the County and promotes agricultural land use and rural economy land uses. Outside of the Hamilton JLMA, the County policy permits residential density of one unit per twenty acres (or one unit per ten acres for clustered developments). There are general policies that pertain to all of the Town JLMAs on growth management, land use, transportation, public facilities, and public utilities. Policies that are specific to each town are also included. These policies were based on recommendations from the Town and were coordinated between the Towns and the County during the plan review process. Policies pertaining to Hamilton as stated in the Revised General Plan include:

1. Development within the Hamilton JLMA will comply with the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hamilton and the adjacent area in the JLMA.
2. The County will support Town efforts to develop an identifiable town center to serve as a community focal point for the Town and the JLMA.
3. Development in the Hamilton JLMA will extend the existing street pattern where feasible, and in lieu of extending the existing pattern, develop a traditional street network and block pattern to reflect the County’s and Town’s community design objectives.
4. The County will coordinate with the Town to assure that new developments in the JLMA are planned with roads that are compatible with traditional town designs.

5. The County will work with the Town to effectively manage transportation systems around the Town and to explore methods of traffic calming on Business Route 7 through town including the possible use of a traffic circle at Route 7 and St. Paul Street.
6. The County will work with Hamilton to implement the use of greenbelts or other open space and land management techniques in the JLMA or outside of the JLMA as a means of maintaining a distinct identity for the greater Hamilton community. The County will work with the Town to achieve a balanced land use pattern that will retain Hamilton's historic small town character in a rural setting and maintain its unique sense of place.
7. The County will work with the Town and School Board to support the continuation of Hamilton Elementary School at its present site.



